

## Charity Chic 'Bags for Life' Exhibition Catalogue

Charity Chic is an initiative of St Andrew's and St George's. It aims to promote the importance of ethical and eco-friendly fashion and to demonstrate that constructive consumerism – clothes with conscience - can be chic.

Charity Chic supports:

Reducing exploitative clothing consumption through ethical, fair-trade and eco-friendly initiatives;

Reusing clothing by supporting charity shops and by using vintage and second hand clothing for charity fundraising events;

Recycling clothing by reworking it into new designs and uses.

### Handbag themes

Nineteenth century leather

Dorcas and Dorothy bags

Beaded and embroidered bags

1920s

1930s

Metal and mesh bags

1940s

Cordé

1950s

Lucite

1960s

From our travels

Rhinestone and vanity bags

Magazine clutch bags

Exotic skins

Craft, hand worked and kit bags

Recycled materials

Modern designer

Margaret Thatcher's handbag

### I Nineteenth century leather

1. Navy leather handbag of very fine workmanship. Solid leather handle curved to sit in the hand. Silver coloured metal tubular squeeze lock closure on one side of the frame with tear drop and ball tab on opposite frame to assist opening. Front pocket with incised linear decoration and twist lock closure. Fine beige glazed kid lining, one interior pocket.

No label or maker's mark.

Date: 1880s.

2. Brown leather Gladstone bag. Brass coloured hardware, beige glazed kid lining, three interior pockets with stiffened edges. Eight brass button feet.

Indistinct round stamp on base "... Luggage Shop ..." and the numbers 15 and 824.

Date: late nineteenth century.

Note: This bag belonged to the lender's grandfather who was a corn chandler in Ayrshire.

## II Dorcas and Dorothy bags

A Dorcas bag is a drawstring bag made of cloth with a stiffened base, a Dorothy bag is similar but without stiffening (Wilcox, C. Bags. V&A Publications, London, 1999).

1. Black silk satin and moiré striped Dorcas bag. Black ribbon drawstring handles. Unlined, no pockets.  
No label, probably home made.  
Date: early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Note: This was used by the lender's grandmother as a funeral bag.

2. Black velvet Dorcas bag. Embroidered band of gold and silver metal thread and sequins. Black cord drawstring handles. Black rayon lining, no pockets.  
No label, possibly home made.  
Date: 1920s-30s.

3. Fortuny style, apricot pleated silk Dorothy bag with pendant tassel. Cord drawstring handle.  
Unlined, no pockets.  
Made by Venetia Studium, Venice.  
Date: 1990s.

Note: Venetia Studium manufactures textiles and dresses in prints and pleated silks according to processes developed by Mario Fortuny (1871-1949). Fortuny dresses of pleated silk were popular with 1920s stars of the silent screen and society belles of all ages. Fortuny's own company folded in 1941 but subsequent companies, some family owned, have tried to keep his work in production.

### III Beaded and embroidered bags

1. Brown velvet handbag with multicoloured wool embroidered flowers. Silver plated frame with pierced foliate decoration, kiss clasp and oval cable chain handle. Coral pink, silk taffeta lining, no pockets. Frame marked 'EPNS'.

Date: 1910s-20s.

2. Black knitted handbag with swag design in clear glass beads. Embossed silver metal frame with kiss clasp and curb chain handle. Frame decoration is the same on both sides: foliage, flowers, birds and a central scene with sailing boat, lighthouse and windmill. Pale blue silk lining, no pockets.

No label or maker's mark. The frame is most likely German or Dutch.

Date: 1910s-20s.

3. Black knitted bag with swag design in silver cut steel beads. Silver plated frame with engraved leaves and applied foliate decoration edged with millegrain and threaded with ribbon, the same on both sides. Acorn kiss clasp and figaro chain handle. Eau de Nil silk satin lining edged with metallic gimp.

No label or maker's mark. Thought to be made in the USA.

Date: 1910s-20s.

4. Gold, blue and silver cut steel bead bag, beaded loop fringe and tasselled beaded strap handle. Flap with pearl button closure. Cream silk lining, no pockets.

Label: Made in France.

Date: 1920s.

5. Gold and silver cut steel bead bag, straight beaded fringe with looped ends and beaded strap handle. Scalloped edge flap with yellow button closure. Unlined.

French.

Date: 1920s.

Note to 4 and 5:

Cut steel bags are relatively rare survivors because the beads rust if not stored carefully. Also they are heavy and were usually made on a loom with linen thread which means that they can disintegrate if the thread breaks. A very similar steel bead bag is illustrated in the Harrods catalogue for 1929.

6. Silk clutch with Chinese embroidery in shades of blue. Yellow silk lining trimmed around the flap with gold metallic braid. Carved ivory button over press-stud closure.

No label but the embroidered fabric is Chinese and was probably made into a bag later. The press-stud is stamped Made in England.

Date: bag 1920s, embroidery possibly nineteenth century.

7. Black velvet beaded bag. Velvet and beaded strap handle. Press-stud closure. Black rayon lining, one interior pocket with beaded edge.

Label: 'Made in France'.

Date: 1930s.

8. Black velvet clutch bag embroidered with a foliate pattern in gold wire and turquoise and blue silk. Plain back with embroidered finger strap. Press-stud closure. Black moiré faille taffeta lining, two interior pockets.

Label: 'Ganeshi Lall & Son Jewellers Agra (India) Cairo (Egypt) Made in India'.

Date: 1940s.

9. Cream rayon bag embroidered with imitation pearls. Rayon imitation pearl embroidered strap handle. Press-stud closure. Cream rayon lining, no pockets.

No label.

Date: 1930s.

10. White satin clutch embroidered with iridescent sequins, white glass beads and imitation pearls. Press-stud closure. White satin lining, one pocket.

Label: 'Empire Made'.

Date: 1960s.

## IV 1920s

**1.** Fawn and brown check silk taffeta handbag. Plastic mock tortoiseshell (possibly Bakelite) double hinge frame, mock ivory elephant clasp and plastic oval curb chain handle. Cream silk lining with diamond pattern in shades of brown, no pockets.  
No label or maker's mark. The bag was home made in Ireland on a bought frame.  
Date: 1920s.

Note: Double-hinge frames, which open out into a square, were introduced as a novelty in Paris around 1900 and were used up until the 1950s (and possibly 70s).  
Bags with elephant clasps were popular in the 1920s. Raoul Dufy designed an elephant print textile in 1924 and the heroine of Michael Arlen's 'The Green Hat' (1924) wore an elephant print dress.

**2.** Red leather clutch bag stamped and painted with an Art Deco design. Closes with a lightning fastener, i.e. a zip. Lined in beige cotton, one pocket.  
No label or maker's mark on the bag. The zip pull is stamped 'Zipp' with the lightning motif and 'Nurnburg DRP449241'. This is a pre-1930 German patent number.  
Date: second half 1920s.

### Notes:

Zips were an innovative closure on bags in the 1920s and reportedly expensive at 1s 6d per foot. This is equivalent to about £2.75 today but should be considered in the context of a well paid secretary in the late 1920s earning at most £3 10s per week (Wilson E, Taylor T. *Through the Looking Glass: a history of dress from 1860 to the present day*. BBC Books, London, 1989). The first bag to have a zip is said to be the Hermès Bolide in 1923 (Johnson, A. *Handbags: the power of the purse*. Workman Publishing, New York, 2002).

The term 'Art Deco' derives from the Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes, held in Paris in 1925. As a result of that exhibition, innovative, bold, geometric Art Deco designs began to be applied to goods for the mass market, including handbags.

Clutch bags were known as pochettes in the 1920s.

**3.** Grey soft leather bag decorated with Egyptian scenes. On the front: the great Sphinx with a pyramid, palm trees and figure with camel. On the back: a pyramid, palm trees and a Nile boat. Chrome kiss clasp frame, cord handle trimmed with silk tassel and bead. Cream cotton lining, one pocket.  
No label or maker's mark.  
Date: 1920s.

Note: This type of bag is more commonly found with Japanese scenes but Tutankhamun's tomb was discovered in 1922 by Howard Carter and gave rise to a craze for Egyptian style in fashion and interiors.

**4.** Black pleated silk double frame evening bag. Silk strap handle, chrome clasp set with rhinestones. Black silk lining, one pocket, framed black silk swivel purse with kiss clasp.  
Label: 'British Made'.  
Date: 1920s.

Note: Bags with two frames, i.e. an outer frame and an inner kiss clasp frame on a swivel bar, are usually described today as double frame bags and this is the term used in this catalogue. However, in 'The Making & Framing of Hand Bags' by Bagmaker, circa 1917, there is an illustration of this type of frame which is described as "a metal bag frame with inner frame for attaching pocket" (Fig. 6). If you are interested but haven't a clue what we are talking about just ask to see an example!

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## 1920s continued

5. Motor-car clutch bag in brown Morocco leather with red leather trim. Rotating wheels, chrome fixings. Double doors on the front with yellow plastic (probably cellulose) windows and gold metal handle with oval mirror behind. Finger strap on the back with chrome trim. Zip closure, leather tassel zip pull. Flesh coloured moiré lining, one elasticated pocket. No label or maker's mark inside. Chrome 'G' on the radiator may be a maker's mark or possibly the original owner's initial. The zip is marked 'Lightning' on one side and 'Brit. Made Kynock Pat.246850' on the other. This is a 1926 patent number.  
Date: late 1920s.

### Notes:

'The Sketch', 12<sup>th</sup> Dec 1928, has an article about a crocodile and pigskin motor-car clutch bag with a mirror behind the door by Finnigans (New Bond Street, London). It was described as "A most original novelty this season ... a delightfully novel Christmas gift". (p577) and cost 5 guineas. This is equivalent to about £210 today but was well over a week's wages for a secretary at the time.

Transport was a theme in handbags in the 1920s-30s and bags in the shapes of ships and planes were also made (see for example Johnson, Handbags, Workman Publishing, New York, 2002: 470-1).

## v 1930s

1. Brown leather clutch bag with expandable top handle to allow alternative use as a handbag. Whip-stitched flap with press-stud closure. Embossed on the front flap with a much enlarged representation of the underside of the Tara Brooch. Full-width open pocket on the back. Inside lined with brown moiré pattern cotton, two open compartments, one with elasticated pockets. Central brass double frame compartment, the outer with clip closure, the inner carrying a swivel kiss clasp purse divided into two – one half kid lined, the other cotton.  
Label: 'Made in England Arden Forest Wear Guaranteed'. 'Made in England' stamp on underside of flap.  
Date: 1930s.

### Notes:

The Tara Brooch is an 8<sup>th</sup> century annular (ring) brooch less than 2" in diameter. It was discovered in the mid-nineteenth century in County Meath, Ireland and is now in the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

Arden Forest was a manufacturer of decorative leather goods such as handbags, stud boxes, stamp holders, shoehorn and scissor cases.

2. Leather imitation tortoiseshell pattern clutch bag with finger strap on the back. Whip-stitched flap with press-stud closures. Stamped on the front flap with an Art Deco, neo-Greek design and the initials M.B. in gold. Part-lined in gold moiré cotton, pocket under the flap with an inset mirror. Small green leather concertina coin purse with press-stud closure.  
No label or maker's mark.  
Date: 1930s.

3. Navy Morocco leather double frame clutch handbag. Stamped linear decoration on the front. Chrome frame and clasp with leather tab to aid opening. Curved chrome handle which folds down and becomes part of the decoration when the bag is used as a clutch or hinges up for use as a handle. Inner chrome swivel frame kiss clasp purse of navy grosgrain, one half lined in grosgrain (for coins) and the other lined in white kid (for notes). Navy moiré grosgrain lining, one elasticated pocket containing original Morocco covered mirror.  
Label: 'John Pound and Co Ltd London' stamped on the kid lining of the purse.  
Date: 1930s.

4. Handbag of floral print cream wool overprinted with gold (only traces left). Green plastic (probably Bakelite) frame and swivel clasp, fabric strap handle. Cream rayon lining, one pocket, small matching envelope coin purse.  
No label or maker's mark.  
Date: 1930s.

5. Black mock Persian lamb muff bag. Trimmed with black satin frills. Black rayon wrist strap and lining. Zip closure to bag compartment, bead chain zip pull.  
No label or maker's mark.  
Date: 1930s.

### Note:

In 1911 the muff bag returned to fashion as a means of reducing the number of accessories ladies had to carry. "There's room for the lot: mirror, face powder, rouge, and even your purse.' It was 'new and practical – it's so awkward going out with a bag and a muff. The muff-bag eliminates one of these accessories and the bother of having to carry it, not to mention the danger of losing it.'" (Femina, 1911, quoted in Chenoune, *Carried away: all about bags*, 2005:37). Muff bags remained popular up until the 1930s and a good variety were advertised by various manufacturers for Winter 1935 in American newspapers, many with frills down the front, one with an integral watch.

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### 1930s continued

6. Black panne velvet handbag. Brass frame inset with marcasites on the front and engraved with foliate decoration on the back. Clasp inset with black stone carved with flowers, velvet tab for opening. Brass flat curb chain handle. Flesh coloured crepe lining, elasticated pocket.

Label: 'British Made'.

Date: 1930s.

7. Gold kid clutch bag decorated with gold metal 'flowers' set with imitation pearls. Flap and press-stud closure with finger strap on the back. Lined in cream moiré grosgrain, one pocket with hanging mirror. Matching cream grosgrain kiss clasp coin purse stitched to lining.

Label: 'British Made' with LKW logo.

Date: 1930s.

8. Hand painted, pale beige satin pentagonal box bag. Painted satin handle with gold tone fixings and acorn kiss clasp. Pale beige satin lining, two pockets edged with gold piping. Small satin envelope purse attached with chain.

Label: Stamped 'Original Regd Waldybag Design Made in England' in a gold cartouche.

Date: 1930-40s.

#### Notes:

The granular hand painting on this bag is typical of Waldybag. Floral sprays, sprigs and squiggles in the style and colours on this bag are most frequently seen but chinoiserie designs were also produced.

Coin purses attached by chains or cords to the inside of handbags are variously known as dinghy, satellite or captive purses and were common in the mid-twentieth century although they do not always survive; a telltale chain is sometimes all that remains.

## **VI Metal and mesh bags**

**1.** Silver metal chatelaine bag of hand-linked ring mesh with ball drop fringe. Pierced metal top with a butterfly surrounded by foliate and floral decoration set with turquoise glass stones. Kiss clasp. Rings for attaching handle. Pale green cotton sateen lining, mirror under lid.  
No label or maker's mark but possibly German.  
Date: 1890s.

Note: A very similar bag, complete with its chain handle and hook for attaching to a belt, is illustrated in Tracy Tolkien 'Handbags: a collector's guide'. Decoration with butterflies and turquoise is typical of the Art Nouveau period.

**2.** Imitation snakeskin painted metal biscuit tin bag. The design is called Satchel. Trompe l'oeil pockets on front and back, hinged lid, metal swing handle.  
Label: 'Huntley & Palmers Biscuits Reading & London' printed on underside of lid. 'Rd No 493911' printed on base exterior. The tin was manufactured by Huntley Boorne & Stevens.  
Date: 1908.

**3.** Silver metal bag of manufactured ring mesh with mesh 'fringe' attached with metal lozenges. Plain semicircular frame monogrammed M.S.B.McK, kiss clasp, oval cable chain handle. Unlined.  
No label or maker's mark.  
Date: After 1909, when AC Pratt invented a machine for making ring mesh, and probably not later than 1920.

**4.** Dresden ring mesh bag printed with abstract pattern in shades of blue, zigzag mesh fringe. Brass frame with blue glass insets on the front, Art Deco ziggurat design clasp and oval cable chain handle.  
Unlined.  
No label or maker's mark but probably made in Germany or the USA.  
Date: 1920s.

Note: Dresden ring mesh is very fine with a feel and handle almost like silk. It was invented in Dresden in 1918 and the American company of Whiting and Davis were the best known manufacturer. Old designs of mesh bags are being reproduced today.

**5.** Silver coloured metal disc bag, probably aluminium, in the style of Paco Rabanne. Flap with decorative twist lock closure, double cable chain handle. Lined in silver open weave fabric, no pockets.  
Label: 'Made in Italy'. This bag was probably made for Walborg.  
Date: late 1960s.

**6.** Gold coloured metal disc shoulder bag in the style of Paco Rabanne. Flap closure over zipped yellow cotton lining, one pocket. Curb chain strap, length adjustable.  
No label or maker's mark.  
Date: late 1960s.

Note: Paco Rabanne pioneered alternative materials in fashion, making his first plastic dress in 1965, and dresses of paper and dresses and bags out of metal discs using pliers. He opened his own design house in 1966. (O'Hara, The Encyclopaedia of Fashion, Thames and Hudson, London, 1986).

**7.** Brass shoulder bag with chased and punched decoration, copper banding and pierced hinged clasp. Curb chain strap. Lined with purple velvet, no pockets.  
No label or maker's mark but probably Indian.  
Date: 1970s.

**8.** Pierced silver coloured metal minaudière decorated with birds and flowers. Square foxtail chain handle. Unlined.  
Vietnamese.  
Date: modern.

## VII 1940s

1. Gold leather bag. Semicircular brass frame and brass catch. Gold leather wrist strap. Beige taffeta lining, one pocket.  
No label or maker's mark.  
Date: circa 1940s.
  2. Brown leather drawstring pouch bag. Cord drawstrings with leather tassels. Leather handles, tab and press-stud closure. Unlined.  
No label or maker's marks. This bag came from the Netherlands.  
Date: 1940s.
  3. Black suede and leather wrist bag of tear drop shape. Flap closure with round brass and leather clasp. Black moiré taffeta lining, round mirror under the front flap. Two open compartments, one with pocket and a central brass framed compartment with kiss clasp and three pockets, one for lipstick.  
Label: 'Kelvin London Made' with Lion logo.  
Date: 1940s.
- Note: There is a red version of this bag in the Hendrikje Bag Museum, Amsterdam.
4. Matt black satin clutch bag. Decorated with black grosgrain and black rhinestone set ring. Flap with press-stud closure. Black satin lining, two interior compartments each with a pocket. Original mirror and small envelope style black satin, white lined coin purse.  
No label.  
Date: 1940s.
  5. Black grosgrain brass framed box bag. Brass clasp and grosgrain strap handle. Beige rayon taffeta lining, gold piped pocket, central zip pocket. Blue leather backed mirror.  
Possibly by the London Bag Company. Frame stamped LBBF in diamond lozenge. 'Flash' zip.  
Date: 1940s.
  6. Round handbag with three dimensional flower and leaf decoration. Twisted suede handle. Flap and hook closure on the back. Black rayon satin lining, one pocket.  
Label: printed in gold on the pocket 'Anne Marie 228 Rue de Rivoli Hotel Meurice Paris'. Date: second half 1940s.
  7. Black kid suede playing card handbag with brass clubs, hearts, diamonds and spades. Suede handle, brass frame with dice clasp. Black rayon satin lining, two pockets.  
No label or maker's mark but this bag is absolutely identical to the playing card bags made by Anne Marie of Paris.  
Date: 1940s-50s.

### Notes to 6 and 7:

Anne Marie of Paris made whimsical suede and leather handbags in a variety of shapes such as a telephone, piano, clock, radio and champagne bucket with Perspex ice cubes. Beautifully hand-beaded bags were also produced. The bags are famous but little seems to be known about the firm, it is not even clear if Anne Marie was a person or just the name of the company. The address on the label is given as 228 Rue de Rivoli, Hotel Meurice, Paris. This is where the German commander during World War Two had his headquarters and it is now one of the foremost luxury hotels in Paris.

Some suede bags, such as those made by Koret, are labelled as non-crockable. Crocking is removing the crock - excess colouring - that rubs off a newly-dyed hide. Hence non-crockable means the colour does not come off on your hands. A characteristic of Anne Marie of Paris suede bags is that they are not non-crockable.

## VIII Cordé

Cordé is made of rows of gimp yarn, usually rayon, stitched to a fabric background to create unique patterns and was advertised as "the dressiest, handsomest and longest-wearing of all handbag fabrics." Cordé bags were made in the USA and Britain and were popular in the 1940s when leather was in short supply during and after World War Two. Squiggle patterns and decorative Lucite frames and zip pulls are particularly desirable.

**1.** Black cordé handbag of trapezoid shape. Cordé strap handle, circular brass clip fastener. Black bengaline (rayon and cotton) lining, one pocket.

Label: 'M&C Genuine Cordé' printed on pocket. This is an American bag.

Date: 1940's.

**2.** Navy cordé clutch with silver thread decoration on asymmetrical flap. Press-stud closure. Navy rayon lining, no pockets.

Label: '100% Rayon Genuine Cordé Creation'.

Date: 1940s.

**3.** Black cordé clutch with scalloped top edges. Two open pockets, central zipped compartment, ring zip pull. Black lining.

No label or maker's mark.

Date: 1940s.

**4.** Black cordé handbag. Cordé handle, brass frame with decorative brass catch. Black moiré rayon lining, two pockets and an integral purse with press-stud closure.

Label: 'This is a genuine Cordé product Regd Mark Made in England'.

Date: 1940s.

## **IX 1950s**

**1.** Navy leather destination bag with Venice, Rome, London and Paris in gold metal script. Leather covered D handles, brass knob closure. Navy grosgrain lining, two pockets, one zipped. Four gold knob feet.

No label or maker's mark but made in the USA. Donmar zip.

Date: 1950s.

Note: Destination or resort bags were popular in the 1950s and made in various materials including Perspex, often in the shape of a suitcase. They frequently have metal lettering but are sometimes painted. European resort names are common but American holiday destinations also feature, for example New York, Miami, Las Vegas.

**2.** Coffee calf leather handbag. Lacquered brass leather trimmed frame and catch with leather opening tab. Leather handle. Beige suede lining, grosgrain lined pockets, two with leather trim, one zipped. Original mirror and small framed kiss clasp suede purse lined in leather.

No label or maker's mark.

Date: 1950s.

Note: This is an excellent example of one of the dominant handbag styles of the 1950s, a classic, structured, framed bag. Grooming was important, women wore gloves and hats and most would have had a 'good' leather bag, although not necessarily of such high quality as this.

**3.** Fuchsia pink satin musical clutch. Lacquered brass frame and clasp. Cream satin lining, one zip pocket. Has wind up musical box mechanism which, when the bag is opened, plays 'Some enchanted evening' from Rogers and Hammerstein's 'South Pacific'.

Label: stamped: Ingber made in USA.

Date: 1950s.

**4.** Multicoloured plastic caviar beaded bag reversible to white and clear, black plastic handles.

No label or maker's mark but possibly made by Lumured.

Date: late 1950s.

**5.** Black velvet bucket-shape handbag with appliquéd and beaded flower. Black plastic handles, lacquered brass twist lock closure. Black felt lining, two pockets, one zipped.

Label: 'Jolles Original'. This was made in the USA.

Date: 1950s.

**6.** Black velvet handbag. Black satin covered frame, lacquered brass clasp set with an iridescent glass stone. Black satin fore and aft handle with bow trim. Pale pink satin lining, two pockets with black piped edges.

Label: stamped in gold 'Exclusive Waldybag Regd Made in England'.

Date: 1950s.

**7.** Architectural green patent vinyl handbag with black vinyl ends. Brass frame and clasp. Curved black vinyl handle. Beige taffeta lining, two pockets, one zipped.

No label or marks.

Date: 1950s-60s.

**8.** Lacquered brass handbag hook with rubber covered pad. Original beige plastic pouch.

No maker's mark.

Date: 1950s.

**9.** Gold metal poodle handbag hook, pink glass eyes, rubber table protector and rubber covered hook.

No maker's mark.

Date: 1950s.

Note to 8 and 9: Handbag hooks were a popular accessory in the 1950s and variously known as handbag caddies/hangers/retainers and forget-me-not retainers!

## **X Lucite**

Translucent plastic, now generally known as Perspex, was first produced just before the Second World War. This material was important in the war and, for example, used on planes for gunner turrets and windshields. One of the manufacturers was the American company Du Pont whose trademark for this plastic was 'Lucite', which became the generic name for the fantastic sculptural hard plastic handbags made in the USA in the 1950s. These bags were initially expensive luxuries, hand made of thick Lucite, but by the end of the 1950s cheaper versions were being mass produced and they went out of favour. Famous makers include: Wilardy, Llewellyn, Rialto, Dorset-Rex, Tyrolean and Patricia of Miami, but there are many high quality unmarked bags.

Lucite bags are fragile. They will break and crack if not handled with care and are hard to mend satisfactorily. They should be kept away from heat, which causes them to warp irreversibly, and never stored in plastic bags which is one of the causes of terminal Lucite 'disease' and can be detected by a vinegar smell.

**1.** Chrome strip basket weave bag with white marbled Lucite lid. Clear Lucite top handle with chrome fixings and 'S' hook closure on chain. Red grosgrain lining with comb and lipstick holder, one elasticated pocket.

Label: stamped 'Dorset' in gold with the remainder indistinct. This is the 'Dorset Fifth Avenue' stamp. Impressed on the base with 'Pat 248683' which is probably the patent number of the chrome weave construction.

Note: Dorset Fifth Avenue merged with Rex Fifth Avenue in 1951 to form Dorset-Rex. A squarer shaped version of this bag was described in Dorset advertising in Harper's Bazaar April 1952 as "A handbag that looks for all the world like a strawberry basket, woven of gold-coloured metal. Very light, it is complete with comb *and* compact. By Dorset \$12.95, Saks Fifth Avenue." The 'S' hook closure is typical of Dorset bags.

**2.** Thick clear Lucite oval octagonal bag with clear Lucite handles and lacquered brass catch. Four clear Lucite button feet. Unlined.

No label or maker's mark.

Date: 1950s.

Note: Clear Lucite bags were sometimes known as peek-a-boo bags and were intended to have the contents concealed in a scarf to match ones outfit. There are also versions with clear containers on the lid in which flowers and other decorative items could be displayed. These are sometimes described as 'coffin' bags because they look like a coffin with flowers on top and alternatively as wedding bags, presumably because they could be carried as a combination bouquet and bag.

**3.** White marble Lucite treasure chest handbag. Lucite split hoop handle and sprung gold tone button clasp with Lucite centre. Lid attached with piano hinge. Unlined.

Label: Paper label with 'Stylecraft Miami Made in Hong Kong'.

Date: 1950s.

**4.** White pearl Lucite handbag with yellow pearl Lucite lid and pierced floral silver painted brass band attaching body to base. White marbled Lucite curved handles. Four Lucite button feet. Unlined.

Label: 'NYC Llewellyn' engraved on hinge.

Date: 1950s.

**5.** Grey pearl Lucite handbag. Clear Lucite semicircular handle with pewter tone engraved metal fixings and textured catch set with rhinestones. Four clear Lucite button feet. Purple moiré grosgrain lining, no pockets.

Label: indistinctly stamped in gold 'Lewsid Jewel T.M. N.Y.C. Llewellyn Inc'.

Date: 1950.

Note: Llewellyn started making bags in 1951. An identical Lewsid Jewel bag is illustrated in Dooner K. Plastic Handbags: sculpture to wear. Schiffer Publishing Ltd, Altglen, 1992: 19.

## **XI 1960s**

**1.** Black silk handbag with corded seams. Textured gold tone leaf decoration inlaid with rhinestone and black glass. Gold tone clasp, black silk handle. Lined in old gold satin, no pockets.  
Label: stamped on lining 'After Five L and M USA' - this is Lowy and Mund, Chicago and New York.  
Date: circa 1960s.

**2.** Long black leather clutch with asymmetrical chrome clasp. Lined in black leather, three pockets, two with grosgrain linings, one zipped.  
Italian.  
Date: 1960s.  
Brought back from Italy by the lender's father as a present for her mother.

**3.** Cream raffia handbag with faux flap. Lacquered brass frame, ball in loop clasp and 'safety pin' handles. Taupe hopsack lining, one pocket.  
Label: 'Made in Italy'.  
Date: 1960s.

**4.** White vinyl imitation reptile convertible clutch bag. Gold coloured metal frame and latch, with textured decoration inset with rhinestones and pearls. Snake chain handle hinges inside to convert to clutch. Black satin lining, one pocket. Gold lined, black satin kiss clasp purse attached inside with fine chain.  
Label: stamped on the lining 'After Five Made in USA'.  
Date: 1960s

**5.** Orange silk floral print handbag with detachable silk handle. Orange satin lining, one elasticated pocket, one zipped pocket.  
Custom made in Brunei and has a matching sleeveless empire line evening dress.  
Date: 1970.

## **XII From our travels**

**1.** Maroon, faded to brown, leather clutch bag with cream and green leather embroidery. Three compartments lined in beige leather, each with flap and press-stud closure.

Made in Morocco.

Date: circa 1946.

Note: This bag was brought back from Morocco by the lender's father at the end of the Second World War as a present for her mother.

**2.** Collapsible bamboo basket bag stitched with red string. The bag can be folded completely flat by turning it inside out. Bamboo handles and clip closure. Unlined but can be used with a scarf inside to conceal and contain contents.

Made in Japan.

Date: 1940s, 1970s.

Note: The design of this bag may be based on a fish trap and one school of thought is that they were made as souvenirs and brought back by troops returning to Britain and the USA after the Second World War. There are illustrations of these bags in three handbag books; in two they are dated as 1940s (Johnson, Handbags, 2002; Smith, Handbag Chic, 2005) but the Hendrikje Bag Museum dates theirs to the 1970s (Ivo and Ivo, Bags, 2004).

**3.** Shoulder bag made out of a coconut, painted with palm trees and 'Melaka' (Malacca) in English and Chinese. Zip closure and cord handle. Abstract printed cotton cretonne lining (known as bark cloth in the USA).

Made in Malaysia.

Date: circa 1960s.

**4.** Clutch bag made of woven palm fronds, flap embroidered with coloured raffia and shells. Woven palm finger strap on back. Press-stud closure. Lined in floral cotton chintz,

Made in the Bahamas.

Date: thought to be 1950s, although similar versions are still made.

**5.** Cowrie shell shoulder bag with shell strap. Shell and loop closure. Unlined.

Made in the Philippines.

Date: 1970s, although similar versions are still made.

**6.** Shoulder bag made out of a gourd with Inca style incised decoration including a monkey and a fish. Woven string handle trimmed with beads. Unlined.

Made in Chile.

Modern.

**7.** Tan leather bag with whip-stitched edges. Painted in craquelure pattern with two scenes of raised figures of dancers and a woman with scroll and a man on horseback. Leather handles. Leather lined with two open compartments and a central zipped compartment.

Label: 'Mandalay Burma'.

Date: circa 1970s-80s.

**8.** Round varnished bamboo shoulder bag carved with floral and linear patterns. Carved bamboo hinged opening on the top. Bamboo bead shoulder strap. Royal blue satin lining.

No label or maker's mark but most likely from the far-east.

Modern.

continued on next page

## From our travels continued

**9.** Blue and white cotton *furoshiki* – traditional Japanese carrying cloth.

Made in Japan

Date: modern.

Note: A *furoshiki* (literally 'cloth for the bath' from *furo* meaning public bath and *shiki* meaning to spread) is a square cloth which came into use in the Edo period (1603-1868) in public bathhouses for spreading on the floor while undressing and for wrapping bathing things. Later they were used to carry (or wrap) just about anything. Today *furoshiki* have largely been replaced by modern handbags and have lost popularity as practical everyday carrying cloths, but they are making a come back as items of cultural and aesthetic value and are used for wrapping gifts. (With acknowledgement to JUN Japanese gifts for information; Chenoune, Carried away: all about bags, 2005).

**10.** Turquoise plastic faux leather and fabric bag trimmed with sequins, tassels and ruching.

Purchased by the lender in Montesperli, France.

Date: modern.

Note: Winner of an informal competition between friends to find the ugliest bag in the local market!

### **XIII Rhinestone and vanity bags**

**1.** Rhinestone handbag with stones bezel set in white plastic. Spring bar latch encrusted with rhinestones, imitation pearls, glass and gold beads. Brass snake chain handle. Pale gold satin lining, two pockets and a lipstick pocket piped in gold.

No label or maker's mark.

Date: 1950s-60s.

**2.** Prong set rhinestone handbag. Silver metal frame with foliate spandrels, rococo style clip, rope chain handle. White satin lining, one pocket.

Label: 'Oroton Made in West Germany'.

Date: 1970s.

**3.** Rhinestone handbag with blue toned rhinestones bezel set in gold metal. Spring bar latch encrusted with blue and clear rhinestones and gold glass beads. Brass cable chain handle. Apricot satin lining, two pockets and a lipstick pocket piped in gold.

No label or maker's name.

Date: 1950s-60s.

**4.** Black suede vanity bag, brass curb chain drawstring with acorn finials, press-stud closure and suede handle. Black moiré lining, no pockets. Brass framed vanity compartment in base with mirror and original red lipstick in brass bullet-shape push-up case.

No label or maker's mark.

Date: 1930s.

**5.** Sophisticase vanity bag. Gold tone metal vanity case with rhinestone studded Swinglok handle, in black rayon faille carrying case with strap handle and flap pocket with press-stud closure on the back. The case is fitted with a mirror inside the lid, a comb held by clips, the original twist up red lipstick and has a compartment for powder, with sifter and puff, and another for cigarettes or money.

Label: stamped inside 'Volupté USA'.

Date: 1950s.

Note: The Swinglok closure was designed to be nail friendly and the advertisement read:

"All in a sleek golden case with the new Swinglok - that opens or closes with a flip of your finger. Plus an elegant little carrying case. Carry Sophisticase by itself for evening - slip it into your purse for day!"

## **XIV Magazine clutch bags**

Carrie Bradshaw had an 'Elegance' magazine clutch in *Sex and the City*.

**1.** 'Vogue' magazine clutch featuring "Upbeat! Fall – the new appeal". Black rexine strap with press-stud closure. Black cotton lining, one pocket.  
Label: 'Mister Ernest. Made in China'.  
Date: 1970s.

**2.** 'Linea Italiana' magazine clutch featuring "Alta Moda – Valentino, Mila Schön, Lancetti, Balestra, Sarli, Andre Laug, Galitzine, Centinaro, Barocco, Biki, Tita Rossi presentano". White rexine strap, press-stud closure. Black nylon lining, one pocket.  
No label or maker's mark.  
Date: 1970's.

**3.** 'La Mia Casa' magazine clutch, shows a living room interior with a conversation pit. Brown, blue and red rexine strap, press-stud closure. Black nylon lining, one pocket.  
Label: 'Made in Hong Kong'.  
Date: May 1973.

## **xv Exotic skins**

Crocodile skin has little holes on the belly scales – integumentary sense organs for detecting salinity, alligator skin does not (see Smith D. Handbag Chic, 2005 and [www.crocodilian.com](http://www.crocodilian.com) ).

**1.** Snakeskin clutch bag with flap and press-stud closure. Taupe leather and moiré grosgrain lining. Front pocket with leather trimmed hanging mirror on grosgrain hanger. Two interior open compartments and central double frame compartment with chrome closure, containing a moiré kiss clasp swivel purse. Two further pockets and a press-stud pocket under the flap.  
No label or maker's mark. D (or O).R.G.M. stamped on press-stud.  
Date: 1930s.

**2.** Black crocodile clutch bag with flap and press-stud closure. Finger strap on reverse. Beige suede flap facing, beige crocodile lining, three pockets.  
No label or maker's mark.  
Date: 1930s.

**3.** Brown alligator handbag. Brass clasp and frame. Alligator handles. Golden beige suede lining, two pockets, one zipped, plus mirror and lipstick pockets.  
No label or maker's mark.  
Date: 1940s.

**4.** Brown leather mock croc over-arm bag. Leather handle, flap with spring action press-stud closure. Leather lining printed with green and brown abstract floral design. Two open compartments, central zipped section with three pockets, Tefas zip (a British make) with leather tassel pull.  
No label or maker's mark. Press-stud stamped 'Made in England Pat.258385'. This is a 1926 patent number.  
Date: late 1920s-1930s.

**5.** Leopard skin handbag. Black leather trim and handles, gold tone closures which twist open and spring closed. Black suede lining, two open compartments with pockets, including one for lipstick and one zipped. Matching leopard skin pillbox hat and tippet lined in black satin.  
Made in Nairobi, Kenya. Label in hat: Madame Louise Ltd, Nairobi.  
Date: 1960.

**6.** Chestnut brown Crocodile handbag. Crocodile handles and gold tone clasps which twist open and spring closed. Pale brown suede lining, two open compartments with pockets, including one for lipstick and one zipped.  
Made in Nairobi, Kenya.  
Date: 1960.

**7.** Antelope skin muff bag. Bag compartment lined in brown satin with zip closure, separate satin lined muff compartment behind.  
African.  
Date: second half 20<sup>th</sup> century.  
Note: Described by the lender as an African Chief's assassination bag without the knobkerrie!

**8.** Embroidered brown leather shoulder bag with bead and metal decoration. Unlined. Fold over flap closure, front and back pockets with zips and press-studs. Black rope handle.  
No label or maker's mark.  
Date: 1960s-80s.

**9.** Silver imitation ostrich bag. White metal kiss clasp frame and curb chain handle. Cream satin lining, one interior pocket.  
Label: 'Made in England' with 'CFR' monogram.  
Date: 1969.

continued on next page

### **Exotic skins continued**

**10.** Black leather handbag with front panel of Zebra skin. Black leather handles, gold tone clasp which twists open and springs closed. Black mock suede lining, two open compartments with pockets and pen holder, central zipped compartment.

Made in Zimbabwe.

Date: 1973.

**11.** Red dyed python skin bucket-shape shoulder bag. Python handle, zip closure. Red plastic lining, one zip pocket.

No label or maker's mark.

Date: circa 1980s.

**12.** Silver holographic snakeskin shoulder bag. Curb rope chain handle, magnetic snap closure. Silver leather lining, one zip pocket.

Label: 'J Reneé Made in Hong Kong'.

Date: circa 1980s.

## **XVI Craft, hand worked and kit bags**

**1.** Oval black velvet gambling theme box bag. Decorated with a bow, a poodle with a 'diamond' between its paws and a champagne bucket, roulette wheel and dollar bills. Fixed black Lucite handle, black velvet strap and press-stud closure. Black satin lining, no pockets.  
Label: 'Created by Jerry McMillan, Darien, Conn'. This is probably a craft bag as there is no record of Jerry McMillan in the Darien city directories.

Date: 1950s.

**2.** Hand painted and decoupage box bag. Black and grey sponge painted wood. The front is a box frame containing a three dimensional decoupage bird and foliage set under perspex, edged with black velvet ribbon. Papier-mâché bird and decoupage foliage on the back. Detachable black Lucite handle and gold ball clasp. Red felt lining with black braid trim. Four brass feet. No label or maker's mark. This appears to be a home made bag.

Date: circa 1960s.

**3.** Cream synthetic linen Enid Collins style bucket bag decorated on the front with beads and sequins in a sea theme. Vinyl trim and handles, gold tone twist lock closure. Vinyl lining, zip pocket, plywood base.

No label but identical to a 'Sea Shells' kit produced by Jewel Tone in the USA.

Date: 1960s.

**4.** Petit point bag, approximately 400 stitches to the inch. Floral design in a cream cartouche on a black ground, piped in cream silk. Delicately chased gold coloured frame decorated with marcasite. Filigree bow-shape catch and drop tab, brass cable chain handle. Remains of cream cotton sateen lining.

This is by Gorwood and would have had a label 'Gorwood Handbags of Distinction'.

Date: 1950s-60s.

**5.** Petit point bag, approximately 1024 stitches to the inch. Floral design on black ground, piped in black silk and hand stitched to gold tone frame. Spring clasp, snake chain handle. Black silk lining, one pocket.

No label but probably made in China.

Date: circa 1970s.

**6.** Quilted pink silk clutch bag. Decorated with appliquéd, beaded silk flowers. Button and loop closure, pink silk lining, no pockets. Matching flower brooch.

Label: 'An original by Marian Wixey'.

Date: circa 1980s.

**7.** Black silk tote bag with white button decoration. White satin lining, two pockets.

Handmade in Edinburgh by Elizabeth Graham.

Date: 2006.

## **XVII Recycled materials**

**1.** Tote bag hand made from flour sack with turquoise trim.

Made in Malawi.

Date: 1980s.

**2.** Bottle top bag, hand made from Krest bitter lemon metal bottle tops and galvanised wire. Coiled wire handles. Lined with recycled carrier bag.

Made in Africa.

Date: modern.

Note: Leather lined bottle top bags similar to this were sold by Mulberry in 2002 to raise money for HIV/AIDS work in Kenya.

**3.** Carrier bag hand made out of newspaper. String handles.

Made in India as part of an aid programme for street children.

Date: modern.

**4.** Handbag made of recycled plastic carrier bags. Suede trim and handles. Press-stud closure.

Silk lining, one interior zipped pocket

Made in Delhi as part of an employment programme for women.

Date: modern.

**5.** Handbag made of handmade recycled plastic (HRP) with leaf print.

Made in Delhi, India.

Date: modern.

Note: Oodles and Oodles retail these bags in the UK and write that "a non profit organisation, using a blend of creativity, design and innovation have turned what was once a dull environmental hazard, into clean, funky and fashionable material, from which have been crafted a range of appealing handbags.

We aim through fair trade to provide much needed employment, particularly in rural areas, and also to keep alive traditional craft skills.

All workers involved in making and packing our products are treated with respect in reasonable working conditions and are paid fair wages. No child is exploited.

Our goods and production techniques are environmentally friendly. We reuse packaging and promote the use of newspaper. We use green electricity.

We support ideas for improving social medical and education conditions for worker families involved in the production of our goods."

## XVIII Modern designer

**Beverly Feldman** designs handbags and shoes, her first shop was in Ibiza and she now also has shops in Fifth Avenue, New York and St Barth's. Samantha Jones carried a Beverly Feldman leopard clutch in *Sex and the City*.

1. Beverly Feldman patchwork suede and gold leather shoulder bag. Suede threaded curb chain handles. Black grosgrain lining, one interior zip pocket.

Label: 'Beverly Feldman Spain'.

Date: 1980s.

2. Beverly Feldman cork shoulder bag with glitter, appliquéd gold leather and rhinestone decoration. Black cotton lining, two compartments, zip pocket.

Label: 'Beverly Feldman Spain'.

Date: 1980s.

British designer **Lulu Guinness** began designing handbags in 1989, reviving a 1950s tradition of witty, glamorous evening bags and totes. Several of her early designs have been collected by museums including the V&A and the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. In the mid 1990s she designed an affordable range of bags for UK department store Debenhams, of which there are several examples here.

3. Lulu Guinness black satin 'Picnic rose basket' with pink and cream roses. Black satin handles and lining, no pockets.

Designer: Lulu Guinness.

Date: 1993.

Note: Lulu Guinness's most iconic handbag design, an example of which is in the Victoria and Albert Museum's permanent fashion collection.

4. Lulu Guinness black satin purse embroidered with red and white handbags and 'You can never have too many!' Zip closure with Lulu Guinness 'mirror' zip pull. Black satin lining.

Label: 'Lulu Guinness'. Personally signed by Lulu Guinness.

Date: 2004

5. Lulu Guinness turquoise mesh tote beaded and appliquéd with sea horses and shells. Blue satin handles and trim. Unlined.

Designer: 'Lulu Guinness London'.

Date: 2006.

6. Lulu Guinness tote bag and accompanying book, both personally signed by Lulu Guinness: Black satin and silver tote 'Lulu's 12 suggestions for women'. Lilac satin lining, zip pocket and phone pocket.

Label: 'Lulu Guinness'.

Date: 2005.

Lulu Guinness 'Put on your pearls girls', Rizzoli, New York, 2005.

7. Lulu Guinness black mesh tote with red flowers embroidered in raffia. Lined in floral cotton, one pocket.

Label: 'Lulu Guinness'. Designers at Debenhams range.

Date: circa 2000.

8. Lulu Guinness black satin tote embroidered with butterflies and flowers. Black satin lining, one pocket.

Label: 'Lulu Guinness'. Designers at Debenhams range.

Date: circa 2000.

continued on next page

## Modern designer continued

**Anya Hindmarch** is particularly well known for photo print bags and in 2001 launched a charity promotion 'Be a Bag' in which customers can have their own photos printed on to a bag. Her trade mark is a bow.

**9.** Anya Hindmarch cat with tiara photo print tote. Leather handles. Beige cotton lining, two pockets, one zipped. Tiny matching kiss clasp coin purse.  
Label: 'Anya Hindmarch London'.  
Date: circa 2000.

**10.** Anya Hindmarch 'Slut!' dead flies photo print cotton and satin mini-tote. Satin handles. Beige pigskin lining, one pocket.  
Label: 'Anya Hindmarch Made in England'.  
Date: 1990s.

**11. Yves Saint Laurent** black suede Mombasa bag. Cast silver tone handle with foliate decoration. Magnetic catch, black suede lining, zip pocket.  
Label: 'Yves Saint Laurent Rive Gauche'.  
Date: circa 2001-2.

Note: American designer Tom Ford was appointed Creative Director of Gucci in 1994 and is given much credit for the revival of Gucci in the late 1990s. In 2000 he became Creative Director of Yves Saint Laurent when Gucci acquired the brand. The Mombasa bag was one of the first YSL accessories designed in his tenure.

**12. Chanel** navy quilted leather shoulder bag convertible to handbag. Chanel double C logo twist lock clasp. Gilt curb chain handle threaded with leather. Red leather lining, three open pockets, one grosgrain lined zip pocket, gilt Chanel logo zip pull.  
Label: stamped 'Chanel' on lining and on both ends of handle, Chanel Paris on reverse of clasp. Large double C Chanel logo under flap.  
Date: 1980s.

Note: Coco Chanel's (1893-1971) first quilted leather handbag, the 2.55, was launched in February 1955. The signature quilting derives from earlier Chanel quilted jersey handbags, where the quilting helped to stiffen the fabric and the signature gilt chain derives from the flat gilt chains used to line Chanel jackets so that they hang better. The signature maroon lining is said to derive from the uniform of Coco Chanel's boarding school in Moulins. Chanel died in 1971, but the house was revitalised in the 1980s by Karl Lagerfeld who joined Chanel in 1983 and reworked and reinterpreted the 2.55 and other archive designs in different sizes, materials and colours.

**13. Fendi** baguette bag of brown Fendi logo canvas and faux leopard. Turquoise and brown reptile handle and closure tab with double F logo magnetic catch. Beige canvas lining, one zip pocket, Fendi stamped zip pull  
Label: stamped 'Fendi Made in Italy' on metal plaque inside and on reverse of clasp. Fendi stamped handle attachments.  
Date: circa 2000.

Note: The first Fendi baguette, so called because it was said it should be carried like a French baguette loaf, was designed in 1997 by Silvia Venturini Fendi. They have been produced ever since in a variety of materials, some in hand woven silk sumptuously embroidered and embellished, and often in limited editions.

continued on next page

## Modern designer continued

**14. Tod's** D-bag, named after Princess Diana. Tan leather with leather handles and detachable shoulder strap. Zip closure, leather and canvas lining, zip pocket. Eight chrome feet.  
Label: Stamped 'Tod's' on the front and on the pocket. Tod's logo leather zip pulls.  
Date: 1990s.

Note: Tod's is an Italian firm founded by Diego Della Valle. Initially they made shoes; the first were a pair of driving moccasins labelled JP Tod's. The name came out of the telephone book but the JP was later dropped as people kept inquiring whether this was a real person. In 1997 handbags were added to the range.

**15. Gucci** 'Jackie O' bag, a revival of the 1960s Gucci bag popularised by Jackie Kennedy. Turquoise canvas, navy leather handle and trim. Chrome 'horse bit' snaffle clasp. Lined in black Gucci print nylon, zip pocket, leather Gucci zip pull.  
Label: stamped 'Gucci Made in Italy' on leather tab inside and on clasp.  
Date: circa 2000.

Note: Gucci was founded in 1921 as a saddlery business, from which the signature horse-bit snaffle derives. As demand for saddlery fell with the rise of the motor car, Gucci moved into handbag and accessory manufacture. The brand was popular in the 1950s and 1960s, especially in the USA where it epitomised European chic. Jackie Kennedy, Elizabeth Taylor and Grace Kelly all carried Gucci. This basic canvas and leather shape was designed for Jackie Kennedy.

**16. Hermés** Herbag with instruction book. Black cowhide top, carrying handle and shoulder strap with attached key in leather cover. Chrome clasp and padlock. Two black treated canvas bags, a briefcase and a tote, which can be attached interchangeably to the leather top. Unlined, no pockets.  
Label: stamped 'Hermés Paris Made in France' on the back of the top, 'Hermés Paris' on the clasp, 'Hermés' on the padlock.  
Date: mid-1990s.

Note: Hermés was founded in 1837 as a harness and saddle maker. With the advent of the motor car, the firm began to make wallets, handbags and travel accessories in classic, functional shapes. Their 1923 Bolide bag is reputed to be the first handbag to use a zip as closure. The Herbag, made of cotton and leather and with interchangeable bags, is related in design to Hermés' Kelly and Birkin bags whose design evolved from a nineteenth century saddlebag.

### The HANDBAG of GLORY



Such was the POWER of the Handbag of GLory that Ladies WEPT when they Saw it and those who TOUCHED it went straight to HEAVEN

source: [www.edwardmonkton.com](http://www.edwardmonkton.com)

### **XIX Margaret Thatcher's handbag – the handbag as weapon**

Black calf leather handbag convertible to clutch. Gold coloured clasp and chain. Leather lined, internal zip pocket.

Label: Salvatore Ferragamo.

Date: 1980s.

#### Notes:

Donated by Baroness Thatcher to Breast Cancer Care and auctioned for a substantial sum. Letter inside from Margaret Thatcher, dated March 2000, reads "This black Ferragamo handbag belonged to me and was used for many special occasions. I would only let it go for a good cause". The auction, in 2001, coincided with the UK's first National Handbag Day which asked women (or anyone with a handbag!) to give all the loose change in their bag to Breast Cancer Care.

Margaret Thatcher's handbag was her most famous accessory and became a symbol of her power. Her combative style gave rise to a new expression in the Oxford English Dictionary: "To handbag, transitive verb (of a woman politician), treat (a person, idea, etc.) ruthlessly or insensitively". The concept of handbag as weapon is probably linked to Monty Python sketches, with actors in drag wielding handbags in battle, and the terms 'handbags at ten paces' and 'handbags at dawn' have passed into common parlance to describe sporting spats, particularly in football. Margaret Thatcher herself wrote, in the context of putting women into combat, "Women have plenty of roles in which they can serve with distinction: some of us even run countries. But generally we are better at wielding the handbag than the bayonet." (Thatcher, M. *Statecraft*, Harper Collins, 2002:45).